

**“A Yankee on the Grand Tour: Ward Nicholas Boylston’s Travels  
in Italy and the Middle East, 1773-1775”**

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With a rich relation nearing death in the summer of 1770, twenty-one year-old Ward Hallowell made the carefully calculated decision to assume [by royal license] the name of his bachelor uncle Nicholas Boylston. Among the thirty-five richest merchants in Boston according to the 1771 tax list, Nicholas Boylston had a reputation as both a wit and an epicure, an impression John Singleton Copley's portrait appears to confirm, especially given its present location looking down from the walls of the Harvard Faculty Club. A lavish dinner at Boylston's house on School Street so overwhelmed the young John Adams that he pronounced the house "a seat. . . for a noble Man, a Prince. The Turkey Carpets, the painted Hangings, the Marble Tables, the rich — Beds with Crimson Damask Cutains and Counterpins, the beautiful Chimney Clock, the Spacious Gardens, are the most magnificent of any thing I have ever seen."<sup>1</sup> Such were the riches the youthful Ward Hallowell hoped to inherit.

Ward Nicholas Boylston's decision to abandon his father's name set Boston tongues wagging, but the carefully planned design paid rich dividends within a

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year. According to the terms of his uncle's will, the ambitious nephew — received a legacy of <sup>1</sup>4,000, less perhaps than he had hoped to realize but more than enough to launch a young man in trade. The lion's share of Nicholas Boylston's estate went to his brother Thomas, another successful merchant, and thus, eluded Ward Nicholas Boylston's hands for another thirty years. Still, young Boylston had not done badly for himself and was soon in business, advertising in the Massachusetts Gazette as early as October, 1771.

Oddly enough for so calculating an heir, Boylston married impulsively. Both his uncles were reputed Tories, although they were careful not to endanger their businesses by committing themselves publicly. Ward Nicholas Boylston's own father, hardly a poor man, had been comptroller of customs at Boston and served in from 1768 on as a member of the American Board of Customs Commissioners, a job that made him the focus of patriot wrath. Thus, his family was unlikely to approve when Ward Nicholas Boylston fell in love with the daughter of leading patriot William Molineux, the darling of the Boston crowd, a man Tories called "the chief leader in Dirty matters." The ill-starred couple eloped in 1771 to New Hampshire and were married aboard H.M.S. Salisbury in Portsmouth harbor. Before the year was out, their son Nicholas was born.<sup>2</sup>

The marriage was not a happy one. By 1773, Ward Nicholas Boylston's health had begun to deteriorate, and he contemplated a trip to southern Italy for a beneficial change of climate. We know little of the nature of his illness, except that in a letter to Andrew Eliot written several months after his arrival, he apologized for being such a poor correspondent, saying that

the attitude of writing was still painful to him.<sup>3</sup> One wonders at such an excuse for whatever the illness, it did not prevent Boylston from a constant round of sightseeing that would daunt even a modern tourist or stop him from filling scores of pages in two folio notebooks describing what he saw. Hindsight and modern psychology prompt us to speculate that Boylston's indisposition grew out of a reckless marriage turned sour. After leaving Boston in the autumn of 1773, he rarely saw his wife again before her death in 1779.

Boylston embarked aboard The King of Naples on October 12, two days before the Massachusetts Gazette broke the news of the East India Company's plans to market tea directly in North American ports, according to the provisions of the Tea Act passed by Parliament the previous May. Thus, Boylston was unaware until the following spring of the maelstrom which swept over Boston soon after his departure, nor was there any way of anticipating he was beginning a self-imposed exile which would last twenty-seven years.<sup>4</sup>

The King of Naples first port of call was Harbour Grace in Newfoundland, which the vessel reached only after a difficult, twenty-one day passage from Boston. [Although Boylston never comments on such mundane matters, the purpose of the the stop in Newfoundland was probably to take on a cargo of salt fish, a staple of New England's growing trade with the ports of southern Europe in the late eighteenth century.] Although the vessel <sup>soon</sup> ~~shortly~~ moved on to the larger harbor at St. John's, Newfoundland, the captain did not set sail for Italy until December 23. Not surprisingly, Boylston found the climate "cold and uncomfortable and the buildings in general ill contrived." St. John's was,



he said "the most Disagreeable place I ever lived in."<sup>5</sup>

The ship's first landfall after leaving St. John's was Cape Trafalgar on January 12, 1774 and benefiting from a strong following breeze, they passed Gibraltar at three o'clock in the afternoon that same day. Compared with fog-enshrouded Newfoundland, Boylston thought the Spanish coast "a very agreeable prospect, . . . cloath'd with a fine Verdure & the Tops of the mountains cover'd with Snow." In five more days, the ship dropped anchor in the harbor at Naples, but because of strict quarantine regulations, no one was allowed ashore until January 22.<sup>6</sup>

On his first day ashore, Boylston called on his banker and went in the evening to the San Carlo opera house. To Boston eyes, the opera which enacted the battle of Alexander the Great and the Indian king Porus was "extreamly elegant" and the dress "vastly superb." Two days later, Boylston succeeded in getting his baggage ashore and inspected by customs. Once settled in comfortable lodgings, the young tourist set about systematically seeing the sights. He was fascinated by the volcanic crater of Sallatara, whose sulphurous fumes changed his shoe buckles and the metal buttons on his coat to a "dark copper cast." [Boylston decided to postpone the exploration of another volcanic fissure after a dog (used to test the presence of poisonous gases) was dragged unconscious from its interior.] Other early stops on his tour included the ruins of a Roman amphitheater in which St. Januarius (San Gennaro), the city's patron saint, had been imprisoned; the Grotto of Posilipo, a 2244 foot long sealevel tunnel through a rocky promontory, built in 27 B.C.; Cicero's villa; the reputed tomb of Virgil; and the Sibyl's Cave.

All were standard Grand Tour sights during the eighteenth century and were usually reached by water at a time when the Bay of Naples must still have been a tourist's paradise.<sup>7</sup>

In mid-February, unsettling news from Boston interrupted Boylston's pleasant round of sight-seeing. The London correspondents of his fledgling merchant firm dispatched him news of the Boston Tea Party almost as soon as word arrived there and warned that "these Acts. . . will cause some violent measures to be taken by Government here." Boylston himself, however, favored "spirited & decisive measures" to bring the patriots "to obedience," hoping, "such acts of outrage will surely never be passed over unnoticed." He also worried that several of his friends who had been appointed consignees by the East India Company would be very materially affected by these events. But since there was little he could do to help them at such a distance, he soon returned to more pleasant distractions.<sup>8</sup>

Eighteenth century tourists could count on being received in local society in a way unknown to travelers today. Shortly after his arrival, Boylston called on Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador to the King of Naples, at his official residence, the Palazzo Sesso. It was the first of many visits, and the English community readily absorbed the affable Bostonian. During his stay in Naples, he received invitations for a masquerade ball at the opera house, dinner with the Earl of Huntingdon (also traveling in Italy), and a musical evening at the Hamilton's.<sup>9</sup>

English tourists were often sharply critical of Roman Catholic practice, and Boylston, though an Anglican rather than a New England Congregationalist,

was no exception. He found the churches of the city very "grand" and "elegant", carefully noting the frescoes and paintings with a connoisseur's eye. But he was shocked by the ceremonial cutting of a young noble woman's hair and the stripping away of her jewels when she took Holy Orders. He scoffed at the idea that the bones which lined the Catacombs of St. Januarius were those of primitive Christians, saying that they were "no other than the remains of those swept away in a terrible pestilence w<sup>ch</sup> raged here in the year 1656," and he was scathingly cynical about the annual miracle of the liquefaction of the coagulated blood of Januarius. "The Veneration paid by the Neapolitans," commented Boylston, "to the memory & remains of this Saint is hardly credible, who stile him their ever powerful Deliverer & Protector," and to whom "they apply in all publick Calamities." Boylston scorned the notion that the failure of the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood in any given year portended all sorts of dire consequences for Naples, but perhaps no one told him that Protestants in attendance were sometimes mobbed if the miracle failed.<sup>10</sup>

Another Neapolitan custom that perplexed Boylston was the exhibiting of the Cocagna during the four Sundays preceding Lent. Several large platforms were erected at diffierent locations in the city and decorated at public expense with quarters of beef, mutton, veal and hogs, as well as various types of salt fish and fowls. The latter caused Boylston particular distress since they were "nailed up alive to die by inches," a practice which he believed anyone "with the Least Degree of humanity can't help being shocked with." Soldiers guarded the displays throughout most of the day, but when the canons



of the fort were fired, the populace surged forward to grab what they could, and since the platforms were "but Slightly built, many accidents happen & often lives are lost."<sup>11</sup>

A central feature of any visit to Naples during the eighteenth century was climbing Mt. Vesuvius and touring the relatively recently excavated cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Boylston and his party journeyed to the foot of the mountain by calashes and then by jackasses till they arrived at a small hermitage, where they were entertained with a few boiled eggs and a bottle of Lacryma Christi, "a Wine much esteem'd & the particular product of the soil round the foot of the mountain." From there on, they ascended by foot, the guides wearing "bells round their middles to help us through the smoke" before arriving at a point near the mouth of the crater where they could view the eruptions of the volcano. The entire journey and return took nearly eight hours.<sup>12</sup>

Smaller than Pompeii, Herculaneum had been rediscovered much earlier in the century with systematic excavations beginning there in 1738, whereas the King of Naples had not undertaken well organized digging at Pompeii until 1763. No one was admitted to the "celebrated Herculaneum Museum" in the royal palace at Portici without first obtaining a written order "from the first minister of state," but Sir William Hamilton easily procured permission for Boylston and two American friends. Boylston was overwhelmed by the scale of the museum, carefully noting the contents of each room in his diary, but the frescoes based on paintings discovered in the two cities (and the foundation of the style of interior decoration popularized by the Scottish architect



Robert Adam) left him cold. The paintings were "more remarkable for their antiquity than their elegance," sniffed Boylston, "which only serves to show the state of painting in those times."<sup>13</sup>

The ruins of Pompeii, however, made a much more profound impression. At the time of his visit, the only buildings yet excavated were the Theater, the Temple of Isis, and what Boylston calls "the Horse Guards" [the barracks of the gladiators?] More than the buildings themselves, it was the perfectly preserved effigies of men and animals that moved Boylston. "While I beheld these awful ruins," Boylston wrote, "my thoughts bid me to Imagine I saw what bore a small resemblance of that General Grand Catastrophe w<sup>ch</sup> at some future day will put an end to all things here on earth."<sup>14</sup>

Although Boylston visited the royal palaces both at Capo di Monte and within the city of Naples itself, it was the new royal residence under construction at Caserta that most dazzled him. At a cost of two million ducats, not including the gardens and waterworks on which the king had already spent nearly six times that amount, Boylston predicted that Caserta would be "the most Grand & costly palace of any in Europe." Unfortunately, Boylston missed seeing the most remarkable feature of the 85-acre grounds, the famous cascade, which since the monarch was in residence, "we cou'd not be permitted to see."<sup>15</sup>

Eighteenth century Britons often arranged their tours in Italy in order to be present at key events: Carnival in Venice, Rome or Naples; Holy Week in Rome; and Ascension Day in Venice. Boylston managed to include them all in his itinerary, spending Carnival in Naples before moving on to Rome midway through

Lent and then to Venice in early May. Accommodations for travellers in between major cities were often extremely Spartan; therefore, tourists frequently left before dawn in order to cover as many miles as possible in a single day. When Boylston left Naples for Rome, he departed at one o'clock in the morning, and even that expedient did not spare him from sleeping in the carriage along with his two servants during his second night on the road.<sup>16</sup>

Passing through Capua, Boylston noted that the residents of the town had debauched Hannibal's troops during their stay in winter quarters there, one of the snippets of classical learning that are woven throughout his journal. Although he expressed similar delight in traveling along the Appian Way, the ancient Roman road joining Capua and the capital city, we know little of the details of Boylston's education. He was not a Harvard graduate at a time when many young men of similar circumstances took degrees, even though they had no intention of joining the clergy. Still, Boylston seems to have proceeded about his travels with a sure sense of what the eighteenth century world expected gentlemen to see, and the names of Renaissance painters and architects are salted through the journal in a knowing way, even if he was somewhat at the mercy of his guides when they proclaimed the picture he was seeing as that particular artist's "greatest masterpiece." <sup>17</sup>

After settling for "indifferent" lodgings "in a remote part of the city," Boylston attended church on his first Sunday in Rome at the Chiesa Nuova in order to catch a glimpse of the Pretender and his court. [He adds no anti-Jacobite political comment but the title he gives the grandson of James II makes his opinion clear enough.] He devoted his first two full days of

sightseeing to a systematic examination of St. Peter's, which he called "the principal & first object worth seeing in Rome." Not surprisingly for one who knew no building larger than Old South Church, he found the basilica "a most Stupendous building," which struck him with "pleasing astonishment." The rich interior of the church had "a most Grand & Solemn appearance", which he thought must unfailingly impress "the mind of the beholder w<sup>th</sup> a Solemn Awe."<sup>18</sup>

Boylston particularly liked the "Grand effect" of Bernini's bronze baldacchino over the high altar and the elaborate glory surrounding the sculpted chair of St. Peter at the east end of the sanctuary. Concerning the two recumbent statues of Justice and Religion at the foot of Peter's chair, Boylston recounts the story that Justice had originally been made a naked figure until "a peasant being caught in an indecent manner w<sup>th</sup> the figure, a Light Bronze mantle [was] thrown over it. In the days before the safeguarding of objects from the public became such a preoccupation, statues occasionally suffered such indignities. At the Uffizzi, when a guard discovered an English milord showering the Medici Venus with kisses, he upbraided him not for touching the statue but for standing on a chair."<sup>19</sup>

The many relics in St. Peter's aroused Boylston's Protestant ire. One altar represents the story of the Polish ambassador who was displeased when after asking the Pope for a relic, he was given a handful of dust from Vespasian's amphitheater. The Pope by a miracle convinced him the dust was impregnated with the blood of holy martyrs, but Boylston commented "one would rather think it to be the blood of animals." He was also disgusted by the sight of the toe of a statue of St. Peter which the devout had nearly worn



away by rubbing it when invoking the saint's aid.<sup>20</sup>

Although Boylston claimed in letters that he was still afflicted by the indisposition which had brought him from Boston to southern Italy, he found enough energy to climb to the lantern at the very summit of the dome of St. Peter's. From that vantage point, the church, with several houses and workshops built upon the flat roof, looked "more like a fortified town than what it Real[ly] is." St. Peter's was the highlight of his tour. Generally, Boylston found the monuments of baroque Rome more to his taste than the austere Palladian buildings he would later see in Venice and Vicenza. In that regard, he differed from most of the English dilettanti who associated baroque excess with papal supremacy and the financial exploitation of the inhabitants of the Papal States.<sup>21</sup>

Elsewhere in the Vatican, Boylston visited Pope Clement's Musuem, as yet unfinished, where he particularly admired a goat of white marble, the large porphyry basin from the Domus Aurea, the Barberini Juno, the Apollo Sauroctonos, the Venus of Cnidos, a Drunken Bacchus, and "also a fine Greek Statue of Apollo [the Apollo Belvedere?]." The Laocoon, that other touchstone of eighteenth century taste, seems to have escaped his notice. In the Vatican Library, only two English items caught his fancy: Henry VIII's Defense of the Seven Sacraments and the same king's love letters to Anne Boleyn, which Boylston described as "not very sentimental but very metaphorical." Disparaging the Papal Armory, Boylston observed it "was not to be compared with. . .the Tower of London for either Goodness or being kept in that order."<sup>22</sup>



Despite his strong Protestant bias, Boylston was a fascinated observer of all the ceremonies of Holy Week, beginning with mass in the papal chapel on Palm Sunday, followed by a procession of the cardinals and the pope in his chair, and ending with a collect which surprised Boylston by its similarity to the Anglican Book of Common Prayer.] Maundy Thursday was packed with events: mass at St. Peter's, the adoration of the Cross by the cardinals, a papal blessing of the multitude in St. Peter's Square accompanied by canon and trumpets, and the ceremonial washing of pilgrims' feet. Concerning the latter, Boylston noted that since their feet were washed before the pope came in, the entire "ceremony of washing 13 persons' feet took about 8 minutes." No such preparations, however, preceded the cardinal's performance of the same ritual act later in the day; Boylston remarked, "To see such a shabby, stinking set of Fellows, with feet covered with Dirt & filth w<sup>ch</sup> the cardinals wash'd & afterwards kiss'd made me sick . . . join'd with the Dissagreeable Efflux w<sup>ch</sup> it created."<sup>23</sup>

Given the lavish spectacles of the first half of the week, Boylston was puzzled on Good Friday that "no Distinction is made this day more than any other, no Labour is forbid, nor any alteration made . . . except the Service Similar to the Church of England is read." Easter Sunday redressed the balance, however, with a two and half hour mass at St. John Lateran, where he saw penitents climbing up a long stone stair on their knees. "After I was tired of seeing the Superstition & folly of such poor deluded creatures," Boylston commented, "I went to the Course [Corso] where [there] was a Grand parade of the nobility & others in their most Elegant equipages & dresses. . .

" His favorite spectacle of all, however, was a Grand Cavalcade of the Pope and cardinals on the first Sunday after Easter, followed a remarkable illumination of the Dome of St. Peter's with six thousand paper lanterns and flaring fire-lamps.<sup>24</sup>

Boylston was always a systematic tourist: after thoroughly familiarizing himself with St. Peter's, he set about visiting all the major churches of Rome before seeing the city's palaces. The luxurious marbles of S. Andrea al Quirinale and S. Maria della Vittoria appealed to his baroque tastes, as did the theatricality of Bernini's "Ecstasy of St. Theresa" in the Cornaro Chapel of the latter, which he called an "incomparable work." S. Maria degli Angeli interested him, being built out of the ruins of the baths of Dioclesian, but although he thought the ancient basilica of S. Maria Maggiore "exceedingly Grand," it appeared to him to bear "a greater resemblance to an assembly hall than a House of God." In his description of S. Pietro in Montorio, one can almost hear the words of Boylston's guide describing the "much Esteemed picture of Christ's Transfiguration" by Raphael as universally recognized not only to be that artist's masterpiece "but of the whole world."<sup>25</sup>

Having visited most of the major churches, Boylston felt free to sample the secular pleasures of the palaces of the Roman nobility. He turned his attention first to the Farnese Palace, admiring the famous Hercules and the statue of a "most remarkable. . . Young Vestal of 16 or 17 years of age with her Veil; the Innocence, Softness & Beauty of the face is such, that this piece of antique Sculpture is worth all that any piece of Sculpture can be valued at." Boylston thought that only the Borghese Palace and gardens rivaled

the splendors of the Farnese. The Borghese was "in point of Furniture & elegance preferable to any in Rome," but the pictures, although by famous artists were "in a Stile that must offend a modest eye." The nudity of the sculptures he found less offensive, particularly admiring Seneca in his bath and three works of Bernini: the bust of Scipione Borghese, the Apollo and Daphne, and the sculptor's version of the young David shown in the very act of throwing a stone at Goliath. Either Boylston or his guides had a tendency toward superlatives; thus, the Dying Gaul was "esteemed the first piece of sculpture in Italy," and the sleeping Hermaphrodite "the finest in the world." Except for the Poussins at the Pamphilli Palace, Boylston saw little at the other palaces to compare with the collections of the Borghese, until he came to the gardens of the Quirinal Palace, especially the "curious waterworks," which included an organ played by water, a star continually revolving over the organ, and a ball balanced constantly in the air by a fountain."<sup>26</sup>

Boylston devoted relatively little time to Rome's antiquities, except for the Pantheon and the Colosseum; he declared that the latter, despite "Suffering All the Injuries of Time," is still "not to be seen without astonishment." He took little interest in the ruins of the Forum, seeing more of the grandeur that was Rome in Michelangelo's Renaissance buildings on the Capitoline. The ancient sculptures of Castor and Pollux and the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius in their architecturally prominent settings in front of the Capitol were well "worth the attention of a foreigner," he said.<sup>27</sup>

In his diary for April 13, Boylston wrote that "having gone thro' with Visitg the most Remarkable Churches [and palaces] in Rome," he would now



devote his attention to "the Several Villages & towns near the City- - -for to take a View of every particular Church & Religious edifice wou'd require six weeks of Constant attendance. . .perhaps without receiving much Satisfaction,. . . there being upward of 430 church[es]. . .within the Walls." Felled by poor health shortly after concluding this resolution, Boylston succeeded only in visiting Tivoli and Hadrian's Villa before leaving Rome. The gardens and waterworks of the Villa d'Este he thought "laid out with great Taste & kept in tolerable order," a high compliment for Boylston who had little patience with the seemingly unkempt appearance of Italian gardens. The villa's fountains, he noted, "are nearly the same with those at Monte Cavallo [the Quirinal Palace]," (hardly a startling observation since they were built for the same man). Although he was disappointed with the contents of the Villa d'Este, he found its situation pleasant, affording as it does "a very fine view of Rome & the Country round it."<sup>28</sup>

Boylston left Rome on April 26, 1774, having spent just over six weeks there, the time which most of the city's "bearleaders," or professional guides, regarded as a minimum for a young gentleman to attain passing familiarity with the city's palaces and churches. The journey over the Apennines and northward through the Marches to Venice promised all the usual horrors of travel between major cities. Boylston's bed the first night was "occupied by the common company w<sup>ch</sup> are to be found in almost all the publick Houses in Italy w<sup>ch</sup> is Lice, Bugs & fleas." The following day, however, was enlivened by a sight of the falls of Terni, which Boylston called "the most remarkable cascade in Italy." Dropping nearly two hundred feet, the water



caused a noise which the travelers could hear long before they saw the several rainbows produced by its spray. Boylston's party rested for the night in Spoleto, but concerning the inn there, he observed "nothing but extreme fatigue woud tempt me to have Slept in such a hole." The third day of the journey took them through Foligno and over the crest of the Apennines, where the road in some places was extremely dangerous, running along the edge of a three hundred foot precipice with "just room for our Chaise wheels." Despite the dangers, Boylston observed that it was "almost impossible to keep our postillion awake & had our horses taken the least start we must have gone over the bluff."<sup>29</sup>

Descending through the mountains toward the Adriatic coast, Boylston paused in Loretto at the Casa Santa, "believed by the enthusiastick of the Church of Rome . . . to have been the House in w<sup>ch</sup> our Saviour was Born", miraculously transported from Bethlehem to Italy by two angels. Nearly thirty thousand pilgrims had made the shrine their goal in 1773, hoping thereby to diminsh their time spent in purgatory by half. The custom that each pilgrim would kneel down and lick the dust of each corner of the Casa Santa before crawling out backwards struck Boylston as "laughable" and "superstitious", but he was nonetheless impressed by the rich gifts sent to the shrine by the Prince of Conde, the Duke of Parma, Philip of Spain and especially Mary Queen of Scots, who gave a gold heart set in rubies.<sup>30</sup>

Arriving finally at the coast on April 30, Boylston was impressed by the new improvements to the harbor at Ancona, the principal Adriatic seaport of the Papal States, and he immediately set about assessing the commercial

possibilities of cargoes which he and his uncle Thomas might dispatch there.

He was curious about the large number of Jews living in the city, who, according to papal regulations, had to wear a piece of red cloth in their hats and were confined to a ghetto, although not locked in at night as in Rome. The road from Ancona to Bologna passed through "as fine a country as [Boylston] ever beheld, every spot of earth was cultivated." He also liked what he saw of the city of Bologna enough to resolve to revisit it, but time was short if he hoped to arrive in Venice in time for the Feast of the Ascension.<sup>31</sup>

Spring floods in the Po River valley delayed him at Padua. Indeed, he was forced to leave his carriage there and complete the rest of the journey to Venice by boat, but since the city was nearly cut off by water, boats were extremely expensive to hire and Boylston resolved to wait an extra day and take the public barge down the Brenta. Crowded on board with thirty-six others, he later regretted his decision. "Men, women, Lousy Beggars & Soldiers were employ'd some catchg flies, others Lousing themselves, some Smoking while others were eating garlick & what wth all these together," observed Boylston, "I was almost ready to faint. . . .I never found myself in such disagreeable company & shall take care never to meet with it again." Late in the day, however, the city of Venice seemed to loom up miraculously out of its lagoon, and all discomfort was forgotten.<sup>32</sup>

Boylston set about seeing the sights in his usual systematic way. The zodaical clock of the Doge's Palace with its attendant moors striking the hours fascinated him, but he doubted the truth that St. Mark was really buried behind the high altar of the cathedral. The Arsenal, despite steep entrance

fees, was one of the chief points of interest for eighteenth century travellers, with its stands of arms arranged in curious forms to suggest trees and fountains. The huge wine reservoir for the Arsenal's workmen overawed the Boston traveller, and he thought the front of the Jesuit Church with its profusion of statues "superb." Inside, he was struck by the pulpit and high altar made of yellow marble so fine that it resembled a carpet. At the Jesuits' new church, a statue of the Virgin Mary and Child caught his attention, dressed as it was in light brocade flowered with silver and crowned with "a fashionable fly Cap with Hair dress'd in the mode of the present day." The Holy Infant wore a white wig, "w<sup>ch</sup> to be sure was a very Ludicrous representation."<sup>33</sup>

On Sunday, May 12, the Feast of the Ascencion, Boylston went to watch the Doge "espouse the Sea." The only way he could describe a gondola was "something in the form of our Whale boats, but not quite so long, painted black with an awning cover'd with Black Cloth." The vessels were so low that Boylston when climbing aboard felt that he was "creeping into a hearse." Even in early May, Boylston found the climate so humid that the air "was not so wholesome as may be expected from its being surrounded by water." When a thunderstorm threatened, all the bells of the city began ringing "in the same manner as the alarm bell for fire in America." The intent he later learned was to dispel the clouds and drive the showers away.<sup>34</sup>

The austerity of Palladio's church of San Giorgio left Boylston cold, but he was more impressed on the inside by Veronese's giant canvas of the "Marriage at Cana" (now ~~in the~~ Louvre), which "for beauty and size," said



Boylston, was "one of the most celebrated pictures in the world." He saw San Giorgio under difficult circumstances, since only a few weeks before his visit the campanile of the adjoining monastery had fallen destroying the Capella Maggiore of the church. The Scuola San Rocco made the reverse impression, however: he found the marble facade very beautiful but dismissed its sixty-two paintings by Tintoretto, saying he "saw nothing inside it worth remarking." It must have been a long day, since Boylston admits that "by this time I was almost fatigued with going from one part of the City to the other."<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps Venice was beginning to lose its magic for Boylston, because he also pronounced after viewing the Rialto Bridge that London's Westminster or Blackfriars . . . makes a much more elegant appearance." The last two stops on his Venetian itinerary were the glass factory at Murano and a return to the Doge's Palace to attend a meeting of the Great Council. Before entering, he was obliged to surrender his sword and state his name and nationality, but he found the meeting a waste of time, since the Council was choosing parish officers in a procedure exactly like the Boston town meeting, except for the fact that relatives were not allowed to vote for one another.<sup>36</sup>

On May 19, after a stay in Venice of less than two weeks, he set out for Padua aboard the Brucello, a sort of tourist barge which made stops at the Villa Pisani and the country seats of other noble Venetians along the way. Padua impressed Boylston as the seat of "one of the first universities for the study of Natural History & Philosophy in all Europe." It was also the city of St. Anthony, "this titular God the Italians invoke when under difficulty & when they mean to swear by the Highest name in heaven." Nevertheless, Boylston



was skeptical of a story of a child who had been scalded to death but was restored by the saint. "Our antiquarian who attended us," remarked Boylston, "assured us we might Depend upon the whole to be true & that St. Antoine was a very Great man."<sup>37</sup>

From Padua, Boylston went to nearby Vicenza to pay homage to the buildings of "the Great Archi[tec]t Palladio." The architect's final work, the Teatro Olimpico, an attempt to reconstruct an ancient amphitheater, delighted him, especially the fixed representations of buildings at the back of the stage, but the Villa Rotonda, the most revered building of the Palladian revival, failed to please. "It is a plain modern building but going to decay," wrote Boylston, "& is hardly worth going two miles out of one's way to see." On the way from Vicenza to Verona, Boylston's carriage broke down, and the accident obliged him to complete the last two miles of the journey on foot in the heat of the day. There, he proclaimed the ancient Roman amphitheater "very little inferior" to the Colosseum in Rome, and unlike the Villa Rotonda, "well worth the time & expence of seeing."<sup>38</sup>

The route to Milan took Boylston past Lake Garda through Brescia. He found the inhabitants of the territory remarkable "for having large wens upon their faces & necks particularly the females." Far from being regarded as a deformity, these wens, he reported, were "look'd upon as great an embellishment to their beauty as it is for an english Lady to have a Dimple in her cheek." When he crossed the border into the Duchy of Milan, the customs authorities searched his bags thoroughly and found objection to several ounces of cream of tartar in his box of medicines, but when Boylston told them it was

worthless, they returned it.] Disappointed with the absence of antiquities in Milan, Boylston consoled himself with a view of the city's Gothic cathedral, calling it after St. Peter's "the first church in Italy." He rightly thought the exterior of the Ospedale Maggiore "more like a palace than a hospital," but found the Ambrosian Library "neither elegant or Great" compared with Harvard College ["at Cambridge in NE.]"<sup>39</sup>

Heading southwest from Milan to Florence, Boylston was pleasantly surprised by his stay in Parma, where he found the people "polite & civil to Strangers and not so deform'd as those of Milan." He also paused several days in Bologna to visit the city which had so interested him previously. The Specola, or university museum, was "most worth see<sup>g</sup>." In addition to the library, there were a large variety of dissections, instruments of surgery, Egyptian mummies, natural curiosities, and "a vast number of human fetuses, one very large of two male bodies grown together w<sup>th</sup> one head & two faces," which was preserved in spirits." "The woman that brought them forth," Boylston reported, "is still living." The museum at Bologna so impressed Boylston that he later later made several benefactions to Harvard to establish a similar collection. Many years after his death, however, the board of overseers supplemented the money by public subscription and used it to found Harvard Medical School.<sup>40</sup>

Recrossing the Apennines on the way from Bologna to Florence, Boylston found the road not quite so dangerous as the one he had taken previously from Rome to Ancona. Still, it was very high and cold, and in some places covered with snow. "I believe I speak w<sup>thin</sup> Bounds," he commented, "when I say we

sometimes saw the Clouds 400 or 500 feet below us." Looking down into the valley of the Arno, he thought the approach to the city "very fine" with the Duomo and campanile, built to the designs of Giotto, towering over the skyline. At closer sight, however, he revised his opinion of the cathedral, finding the interior "very Dark & by no means pleasing to the eye." Nor did the facades of some of the other principal churches please him; he described both Santa Croce and San Lorenzo as having a "very mean appearance," but once inside San Lorenzo's Medici Chapel, the architect's rich use of marbles made a convert of him. Even though "its architecture is not approved by connoisseurs," he wrote, "to me it appear'd one of the Grandest Chapels I had seen," something he "wou'd not have omitted seeing in any accot." Concerning the statues of the Medici tomb, Boylston noted that the sculptures were not entirely finished, "which is the case w<sup>th</sup> many of this artiss best performances owing to his being sensible that he should not be able to compleat it in the elegant Stile he had begun with." A curious theory, but perhaps as good an explanation as any.<sup>41</sup>

Above all else, it was the Uffizi, "the Grand Gallery of the Medicis," which drew eighteenth century visitors to Florence. In the center of the Tribuna, the room into which all the museum's greatest treasures had been gathered, stood "the Celebrated Venus of the Medicis . . . about 5 feet High in a State of Nature." "The attitude, form & mould of this figure & its antiquity gives it the name of the finest piece of Statuary in Europe & perhaps the World." Even if Boylston had thought otherwise, he could hardly dare to say so. One eighteenth century tourist, being less than awestruck by



the Medici Venus at first glance, was told to visit it daily to improve his taste. The same room also housed two Venuses by Titian, one modeled on his mistress and the other of his wife; both were "represented w<sup>th</sup> only nature's Dress & in a Stile that wou'd offend a modest eye." Furthermore, two famous Raphaels hung in the room: a Madonna and Child with St. John and a St. John in the Wilderness, the latter apparently at the time "esteem'd one of the finest paintg<sup>s</sup> in the Room."<sup>42</sup>

The other galleries of the Uffizi also appealed to him, particularly a room with over two hundred portraits, mostly of one size, all by "the finest and most celebrated painters," including a remarkable number of self-portraits. Despite examples by Rubens, Raphael and Rembrandt that were highly esteemed at the time, Boylston thought a self-portrait by Adrian van der Werf "the finest paintg I had ever before seen;" "the colours are fine & charmingly shaded." In the armor gallery at the Uffizi, iron chastity belts caught Boylston's eye. They were "invented by Jealous Husbands to defend the Chastity of their wives when the Italians were possessed of a very terrible Disease," Boylston explained, "& I am informed that in some parts of Italy & Spa[i]n those things are made use of to this day." In the Gallery of the Hermaphroditi, Boylston was further scandalized by the sight of a "colossal priapus of white marble;" "but too obscene," he commented.<sup>43</sup>

After the Uffizi, only the Pitti Palace seemed worthy of Boylston's attention. There, he debated whether the Madonna della Sedia was Raphael's greatest masterpiece or another madonna he had seen at the Academy in Parma.

(Whatever he decided it would be about the fifth chef d'oeuvre Boylston attributed to the artist.)<sup>1</sup> Boylston praised the palace gardens as being "laid out in a very pleasg manner," a glowing observation given his general disapproval of Italian gardening. He also discovered a menagery<sup>le</sup> in the palace grounds, "where are kept Several Kind of Rare animals, an Egyptian Cou [?], 2 moose dear, monkies &c and an aviary in w<sup>ch</sup> are four Ostriches, several Vultures, Peacocks, Doves, Guinea fowls, &c." Having finished with the splendors of the Grand Duke's collection, Boylston was ready to move on. "It wou'd be needless after seeg the Gallery & Palace to expect to find anything new or very pleaseing in the princes' & other noblemen's palaces in Florence," he remarked, "which after . . . Rome are little worth seeg."<sup>44</sup>

From Florence, Boylston headed toward Lucca, which curiously enough was the most densely populated part of Italy in the eighteenth century with 295 persons per square mile.<sup>1</sup> Not stopping in Lucca, he traveled on that same day to arrive in Pisa in the early evening. The city was in the midst of a festival celebrated only once in every three years. Its citizens were enjoying bonfires, fireworks, masquerades, and "every Scene of Jolity that is possible to go into." Because of the festival, lodgings were expensive and hard to find. He was offered "an apartment or rather only a matrass stuff'd in one corner of a cock loft" in a "miserable Dirty part of the City where every thing spoke of filth and poverty". Balking at the charge of three guineas, however, Boylston resolved to continue his journey on toward Leghorn (Livorno) after a quick look at Pisa's cathedral and famed leaning campanile.<sup>45</sup>

Since he did not leave Pisa until quarter past nine, he knew there was

no hope of arriving in Leghorn before the city gates shut for the night, so he stopped in a village along the way where there was nothing to eat but "8 Hens eggs half hatch't & a bit of Bread being the whole stock in the House that was eatable." His room that night was filled with "Lice, Bugs & flees . . . as Innumerable as Blades of Grass," but "what still heightened this miserable scene [was] that at 12 o'clock two Girls introduced themselves & told us they were come to go to Bed in one of the spare beds." That would seem enough in one room, but "presently after 2 lads & an old woman . . . also occupied another," bringing the total to eight in one small apartment. Boylston concluded not to go to bed that night but stretched out upon a table. But, added Boylston, "my couch being not of the Softest I did not continue long upon it;" instead, he summoned his coach and drove on to Leghorn.<sup>46</sup>

At Leghorn, Boylston initially stayed at an English inn near the city gates; the numbers of British tourists in Italy had risen so greatly during the eighteenth century that some Englishmen found it profitable to establish their own inns and guarantee a minimum standard of comfort to which English travellers had grown accustomed in their own country. After the horrors of the road from Pisa to Leghorn, Boylston must have found an English-style inn particularly welcome. Within a matter of days after his arrival, Boylston dined with the British consul among a party of "several foreign nobles and ambassadors." After dinner, they went aboard a Russian admiral's ship in the harbor, where they were "genteely entertained, a band playing throughout their tour and an eleven gun salute fired at their departure." Partly because of news that Boston Port Act had stopped all trade there and partly because his



doctors advised him against making the trans-Atlantic journey during the summer months, Boylston had conceived a plan not to return home by September as he had originally intended, but to prolong his tour by a trip to the eastern Mediterranean and the Holy Land. He could have spent the summer in England before returning to Boston in the fall, but he believed that would be too expensive and natural curiosity drove him on to see lands which few English tourists, let alone Americans, had visited by the third quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup>

As he set sail aboard the Venetian ship Bona Sorta for Malta and the Greek islands, Boylston reflected on how pleasant his three week stay in Leghorn had been. Not feeling the need to be constantly sightseeing, he had enjoyed more leisure to cultivate a pleasant social life among the diplomatic and mercantile communities there, a circumstance which had redounded to his benefit in the form of a large number of letters of recommendation for use in various ports of call in the Levant. Embarking at five in the morning on July 8, Boylston made slow progress toward Malta. A light breeze carried them past Corsica and Elba, but the vessel was later becalmed and drifted back closer to Elba. Three days later, they were still adrift when they signaled two small fishing vessels; the fishermen, assuming they were being overtaken by Barbary pirates, jettisoned their cargo to make the fastest possible escape for the shelter of the coast. Another two days passed, before they reached the Sicilian coast, but the evidence of ravages by pirates was everywhere around them; one fishing village had even formed an insurance agreement among its inhabitants for redeeming captives from the Barbary pirates. There was

scarcely a fisherman in the town who had not been made a slave in Tunis three or four times. Finally, a week out of Leghorn, Bona Sorta arrived at Malta on July 15. The intense Mediterranean sunshine had blistered Boylston's hands and face, although he noted that the weather was so cold he had been obliged to wear his surtout.<sup>48</sup>

Quarantine regulations stipulated that Boylston to spend five more days on shipboard before going ashore, but his letters of recommendation proved effective in shortening the period. Once ashore, Boylston called on the British consul, who presented him to the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem to whom the emperor Charles V had given the island in 1530. Boylston thought the fortifications and natural defenses of Malta nearly impregnable, but the small stature and swarthy appearance of the island's inhabitants did not please him. "I did not see any in town what might be called a Handsome woman," Boylston remarked, "& from the common character they bear it would be hard to find an honest one." Perhaps he was simply out of sorts, since Boylston as well as the rest of the crew, fell ill before leaving Malta. He insisted that the inhabitants of the island were "subject to sore eyes and Headaches . . . caused by the blowing of the light burning sand & the refelction of the Sun from the white rocky soil," but that so many of his shipmates succumbed at once suggests another cause.<sup>49</sup>

Setting sail from Malta on July 20, Bona Sorta was abreast of Cape Mattapan in the southern Peloponnese by July 22. Catching sight of Crete, Boylston remarked on the depopulation of the island following twenty-seven years of war and subsequent Turkish rule. Over 130 years before the

excavations of Arthur Evans at Knossos, rumor already associated a site near Candia (Heraklion) with the legendary labyrinth of Minos. "The labyrinth," Boylston wrote, "is s<sup>d</sup> to be 2 miles in length & covered with earth & there is no entering it without Torches & a clue to prevent being lost." (Such eighteenth century descriptions probably refer to caves rather than the actual ruins of the palace itself.)<sup>50</sup>

Sailing north through the Cyclades, Boylston did not go ashore before landing on the island of Skiros off the coast of Euboea on July 31. There, a local farmer entertained him with a glass of his own iced wine but would not take any payment, saying he had no doubt he should be similarly received were he to visit Boylston's country. The next day being Sunday, Bona Sorta's crew left the harbor before dawn to make the steep ascent to the village to attend mass. As the only Protestant, Boylston was left on his own to explore the town. Boylston pronounced most of the houses hovels, but thought the people were civil, though "all of the lower class." "The women are in general very ordinary," remarked Boylston, "w<sup>ch</sup> may perhaps be owing to the hard labor they undergo." He observed young women, both married and unmarried, as well as some with child, carrying large burdens and "almost sinking under the weight of them while their Husbands & Brothers were divert<sup>d</sup> themselves at home." When he asked one man who spoke Italian about "the injustice of obliging the women to undergo such hard service . . . fit only for the strongest men," the man acknowledged that it was true that the women worked very hard but that was "the custom of the place and the women must submit to it."<sup>51</sup>

Boylston found customs as different among the Greeks as any Europeans he



had encountered so far. He was shocked by the way the Greek Orthodox kept Lent; despite lists proscribing certain foods during fasting, the inhabitants spent "both Day & night in revelling, with priests setting "the worst of examples, both in gameing & Drinking." Of twenty-six people in a coffee house, Boylston counted eleven priests. Otherwise, he lumped the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholics together, saying they worship the same saints and adore the same Virgin Mother. In the islands along the Ionian coast, he encountered a number of expert swimmers and divers, who fished up "Sponges & wrecks." Here, he reported, "money does not influence the parents to Marry their Daughters where their [sic] is the Largest fortune but to those that swim the best." If there are two rival suitors, ofthen "the Prize is tryed before the Lady & Her Father & he that can remain the Longest time under water gains her."<sup>52</sup>

Landing at Smyrna (Izmir) on the coast of Turkey, Boylston had his first taste of the Moslem world. At the time, Smyrna was the greatest center of trade for the entire Levant except Constantinople. Among the Europeans there, French merchants predominated, followed by the Dutch. The Turks restricted Franks, meaning all Christians, to a special part of the city, just as the Jews had been at Rome and Ancona. "Every stranger who would wish to Visit any other part of the City," Boylston reported, must "take a Janissary with him to prevent being insulted by the the Turks who often when in liquor are very abusive." Before being introduced to the local bey, Boylston was instructed in the courtesies of meeting and taking leave. He also noted that guests of the bey were offered wine and beer before leaving the house, even though alcohol

was forbidden by their religion. The bey's hospitality was, however, exceptional, and Boylston soon complained of being obliged to drink so much coffee when visiting, since it was regarded as impolite to refuse. The women Boylston met were just as puzzled by European dress as he was by theirs. Turkish women wondered how European ladies could accustom themselves to stays, while Boylston was scandalized by the fact that "it is look'd upon as much more indecent for a woman to show her ankles than her bare breasts w<sup>ch</sup> have never a thicker covering than a piece of sheer muslin."<sup>53</sup>

After brief stops at Rhodes and Cyprus, Boylston arrived at Tripoli in Syria (modern Lebanon). Again, Boylston noted that trade there was largely in the hands of the French, although the entire economy suffered from heavy Turkish taxation. When meeting with the British consul, he inquired about the possibility of a journey to see the Greek and Roman ruins at Balbeck in the Bekka'a valley. Although not minimizing the difficulties, the consul was encouraging and helped to arrange horses for the trip. Boylston was fortunate that he did so, since within three hours of their conversation, a messenger arrived in Tripoli with orders from the Grand Signor to requisition 320 horses for the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca; only the French and English consuls were exempt from the draft. Boylston's party spent their first night at the Maronite village of Eden in the mountains of Lebanon, where they visited a Jesuit convent with bags of silkworm eggs hanging from the rafters. The villagers evidently believed that the frequent prayers offered there would make the worms more prolific and the silk they produced of better quality. Since the ruling Turks abhorred bells, the people of Eden were summoned to

prayers by the beating of two mallets on a piece of board. Here also, they were met by an armed guard to accompany them on the rest of their trip.<sup>54</sup>

The weather in the upper regions of Mount Lebanon was as "cold & piercing as America in the month of January." The guards also pointed out houses where people had been murdered by brigands and armed shepherds, but Boylston did not credit the story "tho' it may probably be true" since he believed his escorts always magnified the dangers to convince him of their usefulness. He soon discovered the risks were real enough when his guards became embroiled in an argument with some Arab shepherds over a missing sheep; Boylston decided it was safer to ride on and let them settle the dispute among themselves. On the second night, he lodged at a Maronite convent at the foot of the mountains in the Bekka'a Valley. The room was ten feet square with mud brick walls and a roof of beams covered with oak boughs. For beds, there were four meal sacks filled with grain and swarming with lice and fleas. A crucifix made of cow dung hung at one end of the room. The adjoining church looked more like a cow barn than a place of worship, the altar being a piece of plank atop butterball-shaped legs. The only other ornaments in the church were two prints of the City of Paris.<sup>55</sup>

Since they were the first Europeans to visit the village, some 400 people came to see Boylston's party the next morning. Swarming through the open windows, the villagers retreated in consternation when they saw one of the Europeans remove his wig and cried out "what sort of animals are these that can take off part of their head and put it on again without pain?" Although Boylston indulged their curiosity by letting the villagers watch as much as



they pleased, the Maronites fled whenever a European stepped near them and told Boylston's servant that his masters looked very fierce and they should not like to fall into their hands.<sup>56</sup>

Upon arrival in Balbeck, the emir's secretary demanded to know what presents the travellers had brought for the emir. Boylston, who was completely unprepared for the request, replied that they had not brought anything with them but had intended to purchase something for the emir, if he would let them know what would be acceptable. The reply came back that the emir would accept nothing less than a watch and a pair of pistols, otherwise he would not be able to guarantee their safety either in the city or on their return to Tripoli. Boylston sent back word that they would not part with the objects demanded except with their lives. The emir then reduced his demand to fifty piasters, an amount greater than they could spare, if they were to retain adequate funds for the return journey. Finally, Boylston and his fellow travellers purchased forty-two piasters worth of coffee in the market and sent with it their apology for the shortfall, explaining that they did not know the custom of the country, otherwise they would have come better prepared. Graciously, the emir sent word that he would like to see them, saying he possessed an "esteem for all Franks, particularly the English . . . , believing them to be "people of Great Spirit."<sup>57</sup>

The "noble ruins" of Balbeck proved worth the hard journey. The grandeur and extent of the temple, over a quarter mile in length, gave rise to a local belief that it had been built by King Solomon, whereas Boylston correctly ascribed the work to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius. The importance of the

worship of the sun throughout the Middle East prompted Boylston to reflect that Ashtaroath, Baal, and Dagon were all personifications of the sun and that considerable numbers in the vicinity of Balbeck still persisted in this idolatrous worship. "The whole air & astonishing design of this Stupendous Pile," wrote Boylston, "strikes the mind with an idea of grandeur and amazement that is better conceived than describ"d." As the travellers prepared to leave Balbeck, women lined the rooftops and a swarm of curious townspeople followed them through the streets as if they were "malefactors going to the Gallows."<sup>58</sup>

Returning over Mount Lebanon, a violent gale made the mountain track slick with rain and sleet and drove the party of Europeans to seek shelter in a grove 300 of the region's famous cedars. Boylston noted that one tree was over 46 feet in girth at a point six feet from the ground; its lower branches spread 137 feet in all directions and were supported by posts from the ground. Boylston's trip through the mountains of Lebanon and into the Bekk'aa was the most adventurous excursion of his tour, taking him deep into territory hardly ever visited by Europeans.<sup>59</sup>

Travelling south from Tripoli to Acre by boat, Boylston made note of the various people of Lebanon. Passing offshore Beirut, he recorded the presence there of a cult of Venus, who pay their idolatrous adorations to a statue of a naked woman and swear by a particular part of the woman's anatomy which delicacy forbade him to name. Boylston also observed the presence of large numbers of Druze Moslems in southern Lebanon, whom he incorrectly supposed to be "the dispers'd remains of the Christian armies" of the Crusades. At Acre,

Boylston heard the story of an abbess, who fearing the rape of her convent at the city's fall to the Turks, encouraged her charges to cut off their noses and disfigure their faces in order to preserve their virginity. The plan backfired, however, when the Turkish soldiers killed all the convent "out of disappointed lust."<sup>60</sup>

From Acre, Boylston made his way inland, together with a part of fifteen other pilgrims, to Nazareth. Travelling rapidly by horseback, the party of French, English, Italians, Greeks, and Arabs, arrived at Nazareth within two hours. The two thousand eighteenth century inhabitants of this town, "where the word was made flesh," were mostly Christians, but very poor. Boylston, who clearly knew his Bible well, noted in his journal the appropriate biblical citations for all the holy places he was shown. His guides took him to the precipice from which the people of Nazareth would have cast Christ down (Luke 4:29) and pointed out the marks of Christ's hands and feet in the rock, but Boylston commented that it would have required "great Discernm<sup>t</sup> to find any marks that cou'd give rise to such a tradition."<sup>61</sup>

On the next day, Boylston visited Mount Tabor, the site of the Transfiguration, but was similarly skeptical when shown three grottoes of modern construction purported to be the tabernacles raised by Peter, James and John. He did, however, enjoy the "enchanting" prospect to the east over the rich plains of Esdraelon and the Sea of Galilee, picking out the site of the Sermon on the Mount and the slope down which he was told the Gadarene swine had rushed. Boylston then returned to Acre before making the short trip by boat to Haifa and Mount Carmel, a place also venerated by the Turks because of



the cave of the prophet Elisha.<sup>62</sup>

On November 1, Boylston was put ashore at Jaffa so that he could make the inland pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but his vessel could not remain there long because of the lack of a good anchorage. The population of Jaffa, Boylston claimed, was "more or less according to the number of Pilgrims w<sup>ch</sup> are passing to and from Jerusalem, this being the nearest point." The road across the coastal plain and through the inland mountains was extremely dangerous due to the presence of Bedouin tribesman who found small groups of travellers easy prey for robbery and extortion. Boylston surrendered all his money in exchange for a note payable in Jerusalem to one of the various orders of friars who assisted pilgrims on their route and "by their recommendation alter'd our Dress to the most ordinary we had."<sup>63</sup>

Everywhere around him Boylston noted what he perceived as the effects of bad government. The soil of central Palestine he believed to be "exceedg good but shamefully neglected," because "in a Government such as this . . . the Husbandman cannot promise himself even the prospect of reapg the rewards of his Labour." Farmers, even when plowing land near their homes, found it necessary to employ at least "2 armed companions to prevent his cattle being taken . . . & himself stript of everything." Thus, the Land of Promise was remarkable for its barrenness, and Boylston found it "quite the reverse of what it is called in Scripture a Land flowing with milk & Honey."<sup>64</sup>

Boylston was similarly censorious about the land's inhabitants, calling the Bedouins "a set of wild Arabs who have no settled country or place of residence but live in tents three or four families together almost in a state

of nature." "The children range about the field," he commented, like its wild four-footed inhabitants from w<sup>ch</sup> they only differ in form & partake of every savage quality." No previous part of his journey had been so dangerous and expensive as the road to Jerusalem, and his party considered halting until the local Arabs moderated their extortionate demands. The tribesmen, it appears, had learned to charge Englishmen more, "from the example of two English gentlemen who had lately made this Tour & being desirous of appear<sup>g</sup> in the character of an Englishman [paid] whatever was demanded & double the value for everything." Their bargaining techniques, Boylston noted sourly, "showed "more prodigality than discretion."<sup>65</sup>

Boylston arrived at the Bethlehem Gate of Jerusalem well after dark on the second day of his journey from Jaffa. Wet to the skin from rain, Boylston pretended to be a friar in order to persuade the Turkish guards to open the gate. When Boylston was introduced to the "president" of the friars who had escorted him to Jerusalem, the holy man expressed "great Surprize to see an American," a reaction which Boylston met nearly everywhere in Jerusalem. During the eighteenth century, the Holy Land was still an exotic locale for English travellers, let alone Americans. Boylston must have been one of the first American tourists to visit the region. In Jerusalem, a city of 12,000, there were many Christians, who lived under severe liabilities placed on them by their Turkish overlords. The restrictions fell with particular force on the convents, which were a necessity for pilgrims since they were the only places of entertainment. The price of bread in Jerusalem was double that in England or America. All provisions for the city came overland from Jaffa, and when the

road was closed, as happened fourteen months before Boylston's visit, famine prevailed.<sup>66</sup>

Rarely very tolerant of cultural differences, Boylston found few good words for the Turks. He had arrived in Jerusalem on the first night of the holy month of Ramadan. Forbidden to eat from sunrise to sunset, the Turks would lessen the rigor of the fast by feasting and smoking all night long and then going to bed at dawn. "While Ramadan lasts," Boylston observed, "the Turks are very licentious & it is particularly Dangerous for a Christian to be abroad in the streets after Dark, it being no crime for a Turk to Dispatch a Christian into another world whenever the Devil prompts him."<sup>67</sup>

While in Jerusalem, Boylston made the usual round of visits to places associated with particular events in the Old and New Testaments. The reputed place where Christ was crowned with thorns was now a storehouse for the horses of the Basha. Nor was it possible to visit the site of Solomon's temple since it was now a mosque. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was troubled by quarrels between various Christian groups, particularly the Greeks and the Latins. The previous Easter, this "unChristian rage" had "proceeded to Blows & bloodshed" at the doors of the Church. According to Boylston, the Greek Orthodox pretended that Heavenly Fire descended on the Sepulchre on the Eve of Good Friday and lit the lamps there. This fire was then sold to Pilgrims, providing one of the principal sources of income for the shrine. "The Latins," however, had taken "great pains to expose the Cheat & shew the Holes where the candles and matches are put which are used in lighting the lamps." Outside Jerusalem, Boylston, riding with an armed escort, visited some nearby sites like the



Mount of Olives but it was too dangerous to travel into the Jordan River valley or to the Dead Sea.<sup>68</sup>

Before leaving Jerusalem, Boylston sent to the head man of the local Bedouin tribes asking the price of safe passage to the coast, but receiving no answer and suspecting some mischief, he set out on the evening of November 17 by another road. Neither he nor his four guards saw anyone that night before 3 AM, and he arrived safe in Jaffa by 2 PM the following afternoon. At this point, several pages are missing from Boylston's journal. The last page of his second notebook describes an ascent of the Great Pyramid and promises to continue the account in a third book covered in marble colored paper. Unfortunately, the last notebook, if it ever existed, has not survived, and we are left to piece together the rest of Boylston's travels from other sources. A letter written from London by his cousin, Isaac Smith, Jr. to Boylston's uncle (Smith's father), reports that Boylston had just arrived there in late July after "a very extensive tour," having visited "Italy, the Island of Malta, some of the Islands in the [Greek] Archipelago, the holy land [sic], Egypt & part of Arabia." If Boylston visited Arabia, we have no record of it, because a letter written by Boylston to his mother Mary Hallowell makes no mention of anything after leaving Jaffa and before arriving in Alexandria. It also implies that there was no intervening stop from Egypt to Italy where the letter was written. We know from letters written to other correspondents that he was back in Leghorn as early as April 3, 1775 and was in Alexandria as early as January 27. Still, there is a long gap of time unaccounted for from November 18, 1774, when the journal breaks off, until January 27, 1775 when

can be definitely placed in Egypt. If we assume he went directly from Jaffa to Alexandria and directly from Egypt to Italy that would mean he spent over four months in Egypt, the longest time he remained anywhere outside of his initial stay in Italy.<sup>69</sup>

After arriving at Alexandria, Boylston joined a British officer in the service of the Bey on his way to Cairo. They went first by caravan to Rosetta, located on another branch of the Nile delta. At Rosetta, they found a boat belonging to the Bey which would take them to Cairo. According to Boylston, "Nothing could be more delightful than the prospects which this short voyage of 7 days afforded us, villages & Towns crowded with people, Trees blooming, Fields covered with grain & Groves of Palm Trees loaded with fruit," and all at a season, he reminded his mother, "when you saw nothing more delightfull than a Snow bank." Gloating further, he recalled that he had passed an entire winter in the Mediterranean without once going near a fire.<sup>70</sup>

Although Boylston found the towns of the Nile delta picturesque, he regarded the customs of some of the villagers as peculiar when judged by the standards of eighteenth century Boston. Describing an Egyptian wedding, he observed that musicians headed the procession, followed by the household furniture and clothes of the bride and groom, next the groom himself, and finally the bride accompanied by a number of women "making a noise with their Lips, not unlike the gabling of a Turkey cock [which] is esteem'd by their greatest Virtuoso's as the perfection of musick." Similar condescension marks his description of the inhabitants attire:

"the Inhabitants go in a State of nature, Girls of 16 & boys of 18 without the least covering & those of the better sort wear only a pair of Loose trowsers & a kind of frock of black hair cloth w<sup>th</sup> a course cotton shirt underneath, the women only with a blue shift & a piece of Linnen w<sup>ch</sup> covers the face it being the great Crime for a woman to be seen abroad with her face uncover'd or without Bracelets of Iron & Steel about their ankles & arms & a large Ring in their noses, their hair hanging down in long tresses with bells at the End.<sup>71</sup>

Never a very tolerant traveller, Boylston could never understand why people behaved differently than himself.

Cairo in the eighteenth century sounds much like Cairo today. Supposed to be one of the greatest cities of the world, Cairo fell far below Boylston's expectations. The streets were narrow and dirty, the houses, being built around courtyards, presented no windows to the street, and the streets were "throng'd with Beggars, Cripples & Blind," and of the latter he had never seen so many in his life. Naked holy men roaming the streets added to the exotic commotion. These saints, whom Boylston claimed were usually quite mad, were allowed great latitude in their behavior. Their actions, however obscene, were not the least noticed by the Cairenes, although the same gestures prompted Boylston to comment that, "The Egyptians in general are much addicted to that abominable Vice for which two cities [Sodom and Gomorrah] suffer'd the peculiar marks of Divine Vengeance."<sup>72</sup>

Transportation throughout the city was difficult. "No Christian," Boylston complained, "is allow'd to ride anything better than a jackass & as it is almost impossible to pass through the narrow streets by reason of the continual throng of people, it is necessary for a stranger here to hire "[a



mule], which is always accompanied by a driver who "runs behind with a Great Club Beating the poor beast." The mules were so small that one's feet dragged, and the animals would occasionally lie down in the street when they were no longer able to carry Boylston's weight. Franks were also expected to dismount whenever they encountered either a bey or a bashaw in the street, which offended Boylston's dignity and slowed the pace of so assiduous a tourist.<sup>73</sup>

Cultural differences surrounding the status of women fascinated Boylston throughout the Arab world. He found fault with the seclusion and idleness of Egyptian women, and regretted that "fat is look'd upon [as] a Great ornament & particular Beauty." "I think our Cousin Hawes," he wrote his mother, "wou'd be a Prince in [this] Country and the admiration & Envy of the whole City." Far from being reserved, Egyptian women were, he found quite familiar, "excessive fond of Strangers, and Danceing in w<sup>ch</sup> both their Gestures & musick exactly resembles the negroes in our Common of a Training day." More than any other custom, the impropriety of women showing their faces in public puzzled him. "Perhaps I may tell you what you will scarcely credit," he wrote his mother, "when I say I have seen several times women who upon the sudden approach of a Stranger have made use of the forepart of her shift to hide her face." When Boylston inquired about this unfathomable practice, a young woman replied that, "it was the Hight of immodesty to show the face, but as to every other part of the Body every woman was made alike & it made very little difference whether they were cloath'd or naked." And indeed, Boylston was forced to acknowledge, "I found what she asserted to be very true."<sup>74</sup>

[Given Boylston's general condescension toward Egyptian culture, he was surprized to find the Egyptians technologically in advance of his own country

in at least one practice. While in the delta, he observed the hatching of hen's eggs in vast ovens, eight to ten thousand eggs at a time. The process of incubation, he noted, took 22 days, and although largely successful, there were quite a few deformities, perhaps the consequence of difficulty in maintaining a constant temperature in the ovens. Although Europeans did not practice incubation in the eighteenth century, the process had been passed from father to son in Egypt as a closely guarded secret since the time of the pharaohs.<sup>75</sup>

As a last brilliant spectacle before leaving Egypt, Boylston witnessed the departure of a great annual caravan on the hajj to Mecca. Over 55,000 in number, the pilgrims were accompanied by 20,000 elegantly caparisoned horses, 3,000 camels, and innumerable mules and jackasses. Six out of the 24 beys of Egypt joined in the pilgrimage, carrying with them what Boylston described as a new pavillion for Mohammed's tomb. (Probably a reference to the kiswah, or brocaded black cloth adorned with quotations from the Koran which enshrouds the Ka'bah, Islam's central shrine, and is replaced annually.) The donors would receive, in return, the old "pavillion", and the camel that carried the burden would never be required to carry anything ever again, but would be maintained by a charitable fund. One realizes the vast scale of the spectacle only when we recall that there were three times as many people in the caravan as there were inhabitants in Boylston's Boston. Life on the Shawmut penninsula would understandably seem rather prosaic and provincial after his travels in the Levant.<sup>76</sup>

The political situation in America had changed so rapidly in Boylston's

absence, however, that it would be impossible for him to return to Boston for another twenty-five years. Boylston arrived in Leghorn on April 3, 1775, only a little over two weeks before the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord. After a brief month renewing commercial and friendly acquaintances there, he had moved on to Genoa. On June 15 in Genoa, he wrote his mother a long account of his stay in Egypt, and complaining that he was tired of traveling by water, he announced plans to travel overland to Turin and then into France, arriving in Paris by the end of the month. Given the conditions of eighteenth century travel, his schedule left no time for sightseeing. He was eager to return home but depressed by rumors of the political situation he might find there. As he wrote his mother,

Publick affairs make me pass many a melancholy Hour. . . . Travel8 has no charm to Dissapate my Load of Trouble, go where I will that follows me. . . . I expect every moment to to hear something dreadful from America every acc<sup>t</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> are mentioned in the Papers seem but a Prelude to it . . . [You] have more to grapple with than I can conceive but under the Grandest trials I hope you will find the Support w<sup>ch</sup> this State does not afford you or can Deprive you of.<sup>77</sup>

It was still too early for him to have heard the news of Lexington and Concord and the ensuing seige of Boston which trapped his Loyalist parents as well as many of his friends and relatives within the patriot lines.

By the time that he arrived in London in mid-July, however, the pattern of events must surely have been clear to him. Boylston elected to remain in London until royal troops could restore order. His business interests in Boston continued to be managed for him by his uncle Thomas, who maintained an ambiguous position throughout the early part of the war. Thomas Boylston



remained in Boston throughout the siege, despite the fact that many patriot merchants elected to leave the city when allowed to do so by General Thomas Gage soon after hostilities began. But unlike Ward Nicholas Boylston's parents, wife and son, Thomas Boylston did not embark for Halifax with the rest of the Loyalist population and British fleet in March, 1776. Thomas Boylston continued rather unsuccessfully to straddle the political fence, seeking profit wherever wartime conditions offered the opportunity. In 1777, he was called before the town meeting to answer charges for engrossing flour, and a crowd of women took more direct action by carting him through the streets for refusing to sell them coffee at what they regarded as a reasonable price.

Finally, Thomas Boylston slipped away to join the rest of the Boylston/Hallowell clan in London. As an absentee, he forfeited any property he had left behind to the state. His assets in England, however, were sufficient for him to join Lane, Son & Fraser as partner in one of the leading London merchant firms specializing in the North American trade. He continued to prosper until the firm went bankrupt in 1793, leaving Thomas Boylston's personal fortune (sometimes rumored as large as  $\frac{1}{2}$  100,000) liable for its debts. When he died in 1798, Thomas Boylston left behind him a tangled estate, which proved ultimately to be the cause of Ward Nicholas Boylston's return to America in 1800.

Thomas Boylston's will had included large benefactions for the city of Boston which the selectmen doubted his remaining assets would cover. Ward Nicholas Boylston settled with the town for a cash payment of several thousand

pounds, if the town would renounce its claim to the estate, thus leaving Boylston as the principal remaining legatee.<sup>78</sup> Once again, Boylston seems to have pulled off an inspired bit of financial chicanery. The Boylston family assets sufficed to maintain Ward Nicholas Boylston and his second wife Alicia Darrow for the rest of his life in an elegant house designed by the young Asher Benjamin on a country estate on the slopes of Mount Wachusett. From this vantage point he could look down on the rest of his less well travelled countrymen, entertain in the aristocratic style he had come to admire in England, and comment acerbicly on the republican politics of the age of the common man.

## Endnotes

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